

23/11/2008

Left Auckland, NZ at 9am for Hong Kong - a 12 hour flight giving us an opportunity to get to know some new faces.

I was seated next to Winston, a self-confessed 'techie', who enjoyed most things regarding technology, and a bit of a photographer buff.

Landing in HK airport, my football was quickly deflated before our connecting flight to Foshan :(

After making it to Foshan, many of the group were shocked at the different set of 'road rules' that were applied in the new environment with our bus making some erratic lane changes, though the driver was seemingly unaware of any danger of his actions

24/11/2008

This was to be our first taste of Kung Fu in Foshan. It began with a performance by soon-to-be masters and some of the school's students. Excitement as we were seeing some of the things that we were about to learn.

The local television crew were there to film us on our first training run as we struggled to keep up with the masters.

Later that night during dinner with our masters, the president of the association, and the Vice Mayor we watched ourselves on the evening news - I featured in one of the close ups while Wes was interviewed.

After dinner we had Mandarin class in the tutors' room learning basic greeting phrases. The night concluded with many of the group heading to the local arcade where our new found group activity was born - BUMPER CARS!!!!

25/11/2008

Today began with more Kung Fu lessons from 8:30 til 12 when we went back for lunch. After lunch I managed to find a store to re-inflate my deflated football and had a chance to look around the local shops.

Today I also had a go at hand-washing some of my filthy clothes in the tub - a new experience for me which I will come to dread (I like washing machines!!!!)

This is the second night that many of us had been to the arcade, once again to enjoy smashing into each other in motorised vehicles

26/11/2008

Today was the day of our Kung Fu performance, which went well despite many of the group having concerns of what they would look like when they saw it again on someone's camera. The guys performed the Haka quite well even though not everyone knew all the words.

In the evening, after dinner with the masters, we split into two groups with one going out to the karaoke bar, while the other went out shopping and yet again to the arcade! (Go bumper cars!)

27/11/2008

This morning we were to drive to Taishan which took all day with the various stops at the first of the

villages. First was a stop at Katrina's government village where we also had lunch. Goldfish and eel were new dishes to our tastbuds. Before reaching our destination one more stop was made at Chrissy's village. Some of the locals came to see what all the fuss was about :p

28/11/2008

Today we visited more villages. Among them were Kane's, Eva's, Kelly's, Jasmine's, and Aden's. At lunch we were served some new dishes; goose and rabbit - both of which were delicious. The evening gave us our first chance to taste the nightlife in China at Freedom City! Just 100m up the road it turned out to be an awesome first outing.

29/11/2008

Today we drove from Taishan to Xintang.

On the way we stopped at a University to see the Lion Dance competition. The skills and abilities of the acrobats blew me away. This is also where Chrissy and I were interviewed by a Caucasian woman who worked for a radio station - I tried to sneak away before she saw me, however, I was not successful...

Reaching the hotel, some of us felt the need to unwind and so were taken to a foot spa. A great experience that I will try to have again before this trip is over.

30/11/2008

Today was a day trip out to Shenzhen. On entry we were expected to show our passports as this was a special economic zone.

We went to the Magnificent China and Minority Village Cultural Park where we were given the opportunity to see and get a taste of some of the other Chinese cultures. The highlight was at the end of the day with a performance involving some amazing acrobatics and fireworks.

1/12/2008

Today we visited some of the Xintang villages. My favourite was Nigel, Liz and Nic's village where there was an old fort by the water complete with moat and drawbridge.

2/12/2008

This morning we visited the last of the villages in Xintang/Dongguan before heading off to Guangzhou. On the way we stopped by a local school where we played football with the local school children on their breaks and then basketball with the teachers. I don't know what the score was, but I think we just edged them out with a few crucial subs toward the end of the game :P

3/12/2008

Today was the last day to visit the remaining villages so we were split up. Andrea and I went off to meet our family friends who would take us to each of our parents' village. Both villages were very much still intact and liveable which surprised us due to seeing some of the previous villages. Mum's village was exactly as I'd remembered from when I last saw it when I was 7 - seeing that brought back memories of the last trip. That night we had dinner at a western buffet restaurant where I pigged out on pizza, pasta, and ice cream!

4/12/2008

Today we went out on a day trip around Guangzhou. This was the first real taste of winter so far with the morning being wet and raining lightly. After a light lunch we were dropped off at the TeeMall where we had time to do some much needed shopping - found an arcade on one of the upper floors which was not good news for some of us spending a bit of time there (I won a Yoshi toy! :D). Dinner was a western buffet restaurant again with much relief from the group. Some ate too much, and then went back for dessert which I found comical :p

After dinner we rode the subway back to the hotel, which was a new experience for me. Will definitely use it again as it is a great way to get out and see the city.

China Winter Camp pt.II

Shanghai

Arriving in Shanghai around dinner time, we were all very eager to fill our stomachs. Upon arrival we were taken to a steamboat restaurant. With so many possible combinations of sauces to choose from, the competitive urge in a few of the trippers made itself evident and soon the competition of who had the best sauce and soup was up and running...the winner of that competition was never conclusive.

During our stay here, the city offered us a chance to experience the nightlife at one of its clubs. It was quite a different experience to what we have here in New Zealand as the emphasis was placed on sitting down to drink while being entertained by singers accompanied by a DJ. As this was on one of our free nights in Shanghai, the fact that around two-thirds of us came out showed how close we had become in the short time period we'd been together. At the end of the evening we walked back to the hotel. Passing by the nearby 24/7 some stopped in for cup noodles! It was also at this time on the way back that I discovered what hotel staff did at 4am – 5 of them were changing one light bulb outside the hotel!!!!



Having been addicted rice crackers all trip, some of us soon got into the harder stuff after that night...NOODLES! It was our new addiction that resulted in staying up late at night, usually in a group of 5 or 6, eating noodles. These 'noodle parties' occurred frequently after or during a hearty game of 'Scum', or other acceptable card games.

Shopping was quite good here, and some of the girls managed to add to their shoe collection even more. The tailor market proved quite popular as a dozen or so of us looked to get tailored suits made for a very reasonable price!

Beijing

Joy City Hotel was located next door to a mall. This proved quite handy as evening ice cream cravings had a way of sneaking up on you. Although it was a chilly 7 degrees outside, you were still able to go to the mall wearing shorts and t-shirts. This was made possible by the indoor walkways connecting the hotel to the mall.



This city offered so much to visitors: Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Summer Palace, Olympic Village to name a few. But, once again, the local markets were a hit among the group as we searched out for gifts and souvenirs – perhaps the most popular item for the group by a long shot were the white Louis Vuitton purses with the small design. These were sought out for market after market!

Hong Kong

Here we had a few days of free time before heading back to NZ. So, this was the place for any last minute shopping and sightseeing. On one of our days, several of us decided to go see the giant Buddha in Ngong Ping. Another day was set aside to go to Ocean Park. Roller coasters were my draw card. However, it was the 'Flying Swing' that brought me the most pleasure, taking me back to my childhood :p



*Little did we know that we were being watched (cable car ride to Ngong Ping)

As this was our free time, we had to fend for ourselves come meal time. This provided an excellent opportunity for us to try new things and perhaps practice the little Chinese that we knew or had learned on the trip. For me, I was quite comfortable eating on the go, meaning street food, or food from the shop-on-the-corner-with-lots-of-people-standing-around-every-morning. This place had everything you could want: dumplings, various kebabs, and noodles, all for a reasonable price.

On the afternoon that we left, it still felt like there was more to do. With the end of the trip in sight, it was hard saying goodbye to the trip that made it possible to meet so many people with whom I have become friends. Thank you NZCA for creating this opportunity. It is an experience that I thoroughly enjoyed and will be hard to forget.